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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
6 December 1965

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Haiti After Duvalier

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The analysis which follows is distilled from the best information available and reflects the belief that even in so backward a country as Haiti the downfall of a dictatorial regime will trigger certain consequences.

2. Duvalier's departure may inaugurate a violent and possibly bloody period. The extent of the turmoil probably would depend on the way he goes -- whether by natural causes, coup or assassination -- and the ability of his would-be heirs to consolidate power and forestall a collapse of public order. Whatever the immediate outcome of a power struggle, over the succeeding weeks or even months, the political situation would be extremely confused and likely to deteriorate rapidly. Duvalier has throttled even the most rudimentary forms of political dialogue and there are few people in Haiti qualified to hold power for long.

3. The Haitian Constitution of 1964, which legalized Duvalier's status as President for life, made no provision for a vice president or for naming a successor. Duvalier has said informally that his 15-year-old son is to succeed him, with Mrs. Duvalier acting as "regent" until the boy reaches maturity. Despite previous constitutional provisions for peaceful and orderly change of government, only five of more than 30 of the past Haitian

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chief executives have lived out their terms and left office voluntarily, and three of these served during the US occupation.

4. An assault upon the regime from any quarter or a successful attack on Duvalier, himself, would be likely to unleash a wave of recrimination and vengeance on the part of those components or victims of his regime who hate each other but had hitherto been held at bay by the President. Indeed, it is likely that the death of the dictator would rupture the government and that the semblance of a civil service which exists at present would melt away. Dissolution of the central bureaucracy would leave the regular armed forces, the rabble-like militia and the secret police to contend among themselves.

THE ARMED FORCES

5. The Haitian armed forces, including air and coast guard personnel, number approximately 4,800 officers and men who are used primarily as a constabulary. Roughly half of the armed forces are quartered in Port au Prince, [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Poorly equipped and led, the armed forces would have no more than an even chance of besting the secret police and militia.

6. The secret police have no official name or status; Haitians refer to them as the Ton Ton Macoute (TTM), a Creole phrase which means "bogeyman." The TTMs are armed thugs, about 1,500 in number, who carry out special assignments -- i.e., assaults and murder, arson, pillage, extortion and violence of all kinds. From time to time, the TTMs overstep themselves and Duvalier temporarily curbs them. However, they are too useful for him to restrain for too long.

7. The civil militia, dubbed the National Security Volunteers (VSN), was created by Duvalier as a counterforce to the regular armed forces and is favored by the President. Totaling about 10,000

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[redacted]

members, the VSN is made up of weekend soldiers who are administratively separate from the regular military but assigned to assist the army. Only about one-third of the VSN members are armed -- and these with antiquated pistols, revolvers and bolt-action rifles. They are poorly trained and could not cope with a trained and disciplined foe, but are effective against even more poorly armed civilians.

8. Duvalier's sudden death from natural causes would probably occasion the least public disorder, assuming that the news could be withheld long enough to permit one or more of his palace entourage to consolidate control over the regular armed forces, the militia and the secret police. The presence of half of the armed forces in the capital [redacted]

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[redacted] would probably give the advantage to the military in determining who would be the new president.

9. The situation would be similar if Duvalier were mentally or physically incapacitated for a long time. Assuming his henchmen were so disposed, they could use their positions as palace insiders to supplant him even before his death. The length of time during which Duvalier was unable to function would determine the extent of disorganization within the government itself.

10. Since taking office eight years ago, Duvalier has managed to prevent anyone in his regime from building up a personal following. Nevertheless, several men within the government have figured in reported plots against Duvalier, or are said to be ready to step in should he die. Various alignments do appear from time to time; but no determined opposition has been detected.

11. Plotting within the military has been endemic since Duvalier's accession. However, premature disclosure invariably has led to imprisonment and death or exile for the plotters. [redacted]

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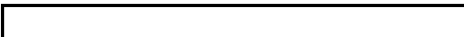
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12. A sudden coup by a person or group closely identified with Duvalier would minimize the dismay among Duvalier's supporters and serve to limit the degree of bloodshed. In this situation, those who have been most closely identified with the excesses and brutality of Duvalier's rule -- notably the TTMs -- would have less fear of reprisals by a successor government because they might themselves be involved in its formation and would have little choice but to support it. If, however, a coup brought to power a person or group not in sympathy with Duvalier's internal policies, the situation would be radically different. The militia and Ton Ton Macoutes probably would react by striking out at the white and mulatto population of Port au Prince out of fear that these groups would seek revenge for their mistreatment under Duvalier.

13. Any assassination of Duvalier which caught his entourage off guard would be likely to signal a reign of terror, probably limited to the capital but possibly extending to the rural areas as well. Members of Duvalier's entourage and the military would have less of an advantage in such a situation, although they still would have the easiest access to the arms and munitions  disorder would be a major problem. The suddenness of the assassination and the resulting public uncertainty probably would prompt the militia and the Ton Ton Macoutes to go on a rampage in Port au Prince -- both to gain what they could out of the breakdown of law and order and to try to overcome the likely reaction of the man-in-the-street to news of Duvalier's death. In addition, the deliberate racist policies of Duvalier -- setting up the majority blacks against the minority whites and mulattos -- would ensure that any conflict would have racial overtones.

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THE COMMUNISTS

14. The uncertainty and turmoil following Duvalier's departure would almost certainly be capitalized on by either or both of Haiti's Communist parties. With a maximum of 500 members and up to 2,000 fellow travelers, the Communists constitute the only internal opposition with any degree of training and organization -- however primitive. Concentrated in Port au Prince, the Communists would be in a position to enter the contest from the start. Their fortunes would be improved under any circumstance in which a successor to Duvalier were not immediately named. They probably would find it to their advantage to prolong any indecision over a new government, possibly making a stab at seizing power themselves. However, this would require effective support among the military, the TTMs and the militia. We do not know whether they would be able to garner such support, but we doubt that they would become the controlling factor even though they might become an important force.

15. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] are known to have had Communist ties in France. None of them is known to have such connections at the present time with either of Haiti's two Communist parties, but all three are anti-US and one or all may be "sleepers."

THE EXILES

16. The exile population, both Communist and non-Communist, would also attempt to take advantage of Duvalier's passing. The exiles could be counted upon to try to return to Haiti immediately -- from the United States, Mexico, possibly the Dominican Republic and from France. In any attempt to establish one of their own number in power in Haiti, the emigrés would be handicapped by the divisiveness, discord and absence of recognized leadership

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[REDACTED]

that have impeded their activities in exile. Individual emigrés enjoy almost no following in Haiti, with the possible exception of former President Paul Magloire. It seems unlikely that any emigré or group of emigrés would be able to seize power without substantial foreign support.

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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

HAITI AFTER DUVALIER

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

Office of Current Intelligence

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